Tells the Facts and Names the Names

CounterPunch

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Defender of Wildlife

"The time has come to put an end to military experimentation on animals...[It is] a tragic waste of animal lives with no purpose but to keep people employed. It's more than outrageous — it's morally obscene."

— Sam Cohen, inventor of the neutron bomb, in a pamphlet released by In Defense of Animals.

Green Guru, Big Oil's Man

Greenwashing's Newest Phenom

By day, Bruce Piasecki leads the busy life of a green guru at the heart of national policy making. He chairs a group charged with "reinventing" the EPA, heads the American Hazard Control Group, and is always welcome on the nation's op-ed pages with his calls for a "business-based environmentalism" that stresses marketplace incentives over burdensome regulation.

Nowhere on his *curriculum vitae* is the most important information about this bustling savant. By night, Piasecki is a rental property of the oil industry.

Last year, Piasecki published *Corporate Environmental Responsibility*, a book which argued that the Bhopal disaster was "the environmental equivalent of Pearl Harbor, a violent wake-up call that shook many nations and many firms". Since then, Piasecki wrote, corporate environmental sensitivity has "matured considerably" with companies developing not only effective but profitable strategies to protect Mother Earth.

Piasecki's book was well-received. Neoliberal panjandrum Gregg Easterbrook said it offered "invaluable insights into the coming change for the positive in ecological affairs" and called its author a "keen observer of the arena where corporate politics and environmental goals intersect".

Corporate Environmental Responsibility singled out four companies for notable eco-activist achievement. Piasecki administered pats on the back to Union Carbide, responsible for the Bhopal catastrophe, for overhauling its environmental auditing programs; to AT&T for seeking to reduce chlorofluorocarbons from electronic production; to Warner-Lambert for work to develop biodegradable plastic; and to ARCO for manufacturing environmentally-sensitive reformulated gasoline.

Piasecki toured a number of major cities to promote his book. We've learned that a beltway pr firm arranged the trip and that ARCO secretly financed it. That firm came in for the greatest praise in Piasecki's book. ARCO chieftain, Lodwrick Cook, is described as "one crazy CEO", a man with "panache" who, like the Greek god Hermes, is "gifted with the ability to make others look good". (This is a most unusual evocation of Hermes, an inhabitant of Mount Olympus better known as the guardian of commerce and particularly renowned for his cunning and thievery. Hermes' first act as a newborn babe was to steal the cattle of his brother Apollo.)

Few but Piasecki rate ARCO a devoted friend of nature. The oil giant has extensive drilling operations in Alaska and the Rockies, and is currently eyeing an area just north of Yellowstone park for oil and gas exploration. It is also the guilty party at some of the largest Superfund sites and has been nemesis for fish along the Blackfoot River.

Piasecki's favorite oil company is also a big funder of the anti-green Wise Use Movement. People for the West!, the Colorado-based Wise Use front, has been blessed with especially generous donations from Hermes' treasury.

ARCO's reformulated gas, which Piasecki calls "the first major breakthrough in the environmental improvement of modern gasoline", is especially dangerous for people who breathe its fumes. Myron Mehlman, a toxicologist at Rutgers, found that 91 percent of workers at refineries where reformulated gas is

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Adventures In Lally Land

Across the world there are brave men and women who turn ashen upon hearing that Lally Weymouth, daughter of Kay Graham and therefore a *Washington Post* op-ed page contributor, is headed their way. These are the *Post*'s regular foreign correspondents, who know well the consequences of Her Royal Highness's descent: haughty demands for interviews to be set up with presidents and tycoons, the blinding inaccuracy of her perceptions, the right-wing dementia and conspiracies spoon-fed to her by her favored advisers, mostly Israeli diplomats and spies.

In the Gorbachev era Weymouth traveled to the land of perestroika and was duly allotted a KGB colonel to shepherd her about. After a week in the termagant's company the colonel was discovered by a journalist from the London *Financial Times* in a state of gibbering terror in the foyer of Weymouth's hotel. She had asked for a soda and he couldn't get the vending machine to work. "She'll kill me, she'll kill me," groaned the cowering scion of Dhzerzinski as he rattled and kicked the obdurate machine. Finally he and the journalist hurled themselves at the beverage dispenser in a joint attack that produced the desired refreshment for the imperious princess.

It's hard keeping track of Weymouth's obsessions. Back in the 1980s her prime activities were whitewashing Israel's foreign wars and describing the heroic activities of Ronald Reagan's "freedom fighters", especially the mujaheddin in Afghanistan and Jonas Savimbi in Angola. More recently, Weymouth has shifted her gaze to the Korean peninsula, where after brief reflection she determined that anything short of bombing Pyongyang back into the Stone Age amounted to cringing appeasement.

We were recently given some amusing information about Weymouth's travels to Pakistan. Back in 1989, Benazir Bhutto was in her first term as prime minister, elected after the preceding leader, Zia ul-Haq, had been dispatched by a plane bomb.

A beltway lobbyist named Dennis Neill had represented Zia. Bhutto replaced him with a pr firm headed by Mark Siegel, a Carter administration veteran. But Neill refused to relinquish the lucrative Pakistani account, ceding only when Bhutto sent him a personal letter informing him that his services were no longer desired. Soon an anonymous letter that remarked unfavorably upon Siegel's religious affiliation was sent to the rabidly anti-Semitic Pakistani press, which swiftly began referring to Bhutto's rep as "the big Jew".

Siegel's firm worked feverishly to set up Weymouth's schedule for her Pakistan trip. The flacks were surprised to learn that an honor guard of army intelligence officers whisked Lally away the moment she stepped off the plane and took her straight to the home of Army head Mirza Aslam Beg.

In Pakistan, rumors abounded that Weymouth's intimate relationships with the flower of the Pakistani general staff were the key to her success in obtaining highly sensitive information. One person who worked with Bhutto at the time tells us that Weymouth "was so close to the military that she had better intelligence than the prime minister".

Weymouth returned from Pakistan to write a 2,000 word piece in the *Post*'s Outlook section, reporting that Bhutto's image at home "[wasn't] so rosy" and that the army couldn't be expected to "remain in the barracks forever". In this latter assessment, Weymouth was accurate: less than a year after her article appeared, an army coup placed Bhutto under house arrest.

Footnote: Weymouth's partner is dingy Eric Breindel, the editorial page editor of *The New York Post* and a high-flier in Babylon until caught in a nasty heroin scandal while working for Senator Pat Moynihan at the Intelligence Committee. Once upon a time Breindel was married to Tamar Jacoby. He persuaded her to accompany him and his father on a trip to Europe, thence for a tour of Auschwitz. In Paris, Breindel proclaimed that editorial duties required his immediate return to New York but urged Jacoby to continue the trip. She and Breindel père made their way to Auschwitz before at last returning to New York.

After depositing Breindel senior in his apartment, Jacoby returned to the nest that she and Eric had made their own. It was denuded of all traces of Breindel, who had returned from Paris to decamp with Weymouth. It is hard to say on which of the two, Eric or Lally, Fate has inflicted the more terrible revenge. ■

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Shalit's Sticky Fingers

Ruth Shalit is in trouble again. **CounterPunch** readers may recall our story last year about her crooked performance in *The New Republic* apropos black/white relations at *The Washington Post*. Now she is being iced, at least for the time being, from her editorial post at *The New Republic* after being caught in petty word theft, Shalit's fourth bout with plagiarism.

The most shameful aspect of the case is that the person she lifted the phrase from in the last case was the tedious Fred Barnes, formerly of *The New Republic*, where the piece Shalit borrowed from was published, and now out to pasture at Rupert Murdoch's *Weekly Standard*. How low can a human being sink! Plagiarizing Barnes is like looting change from a dozing street vagrant. ■

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And That Shark, Dear...

Exactly How Bloated Should a Capitalist Be?

Business lobbies are still smoldering over recent criticisms of their conduct, as in *Newsweek*'s cover story on corporate killers and *The New York Timess* series on downsizing. They'd hoped such whining at capitalism's harsh realities would subside with the extinction of Pat Buchanan's candidacy. But the current uproar over the $5 million plus pay packet of AT&T boss Robert Allen in 1995 shows that tycoon pay bloat still stirs public resentment. Allen's $5,162,300 in direct compensation (rising to $16,090,000 when his unexercised stock options are included) came under scrutiny at the moment he was announcing the lay-offs of 40,000 AT&T workers.

Sarah Anderson and John Cavanagh of the Institute for Policy Studies have just prepared their third annual Executive Compensation Analysis. The top 22 job-slashing CEOs now pull down an average of $4.5 million a year, as against a mere $3.7 million average for the 362 chief executives at the largest US firms.

In a now familiar ritual, the stock value of the down-sizing corporations tends to shoot up the moment they announce the lay-offs, thus producing huge and immediate personal windfalls for the tycoons throwing their employees out on the street. The biggest winner last year was Lucio Noto, CEO of Mobil, whose stock options rose in value by $24 million on the day he booted 4,700 workers. Lawrence Bossidy of Allied-Signal announced 3,000 layoffs and his company's share price promptly jumped $2, landing him an extra $5,000,000 on his 2.5 million CEO's stock options.

In determining how deeply to cut, corporate downsizers understandably worry that if Wall Street decides that the ax has been wielded with insufficient ferocity, the share price will fall. That happened at BellSouth after the firm announced 11,300 lay-offs. Craig Ellis, a financial analyst, declared that "even after these cuts, BellSouth will still employ almost 60,000. That's way too many". BellSouth stock quickly sank by $1.37 a share.

The stock options owned by Lucio Noto, CEO of Mobil, rose in value by $24 million on the day he booted 4,700 workers.

"The public debate on this central issue of growing income inequality has shifted significantly in the past six months," Anderson and Cavanagh report. On April 16 *The Wall Street Journal* carried a detailed story on the labor and pension fund revolt against AT&T over the Allen pay package. The Investor Responsibility Center listed 40 shareholder resolutions in 1995 on excessive executive pay, with ten proposals to gear pay to corporate performance, environmental and social responsibility or to a multiple of the wage of company workers. For the last three years the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers has filed a resolution at the annual general meeting asking that executive pay at GTE be not more than 75 times the wage of the average hourly employee. Of course the tooth-and-claw crowd counter that such reproaches blunt capitalism's central intent, the shriveling of all concerns other than maximum productivity at the lowest possible cost. The flaw of such liberal lamentations over the CEO pay/firings phenomenon is its surprise at the crudities of capitalist rationality.

Liberalism offers a predictable solution, now being advanced by Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico: tax breaks to corporations that treat their workers well. A group of Democrats also recommend tax incentives for corporations holding executive pay to no more than 50 times the wage of the lowest-paid employee. In other words, milk the tax payer to restore sanity to corporate boards of directors.

For those who think the appropriate reward for most CEOs is the tumbrel and then the gibbet, these fine-tunings of the corporate pay packet in the interests of good taste are somewhat farcical. On the other hand, the more union pension funds and huge investors start using their clout to redefine what proper wages for bosses and workers might be, the quicker will the timbre of economic doctrine and discussion be changed for the better.

A final fact from the land of advanced capitalism, where CEOs make 185 times as much as the average worker (in Japan, the ratio is 25 to 1): Allied-Signal's Mexican work force of 3,800 earns 82 cents an hour, with total annual pay at $7.8 million a year — less than CEO Bossidy's 1995 pay packet of $8.4 million. Bossidy led the corporate drive for NAFTA in 1993, pledging his company would not shift jobs south of the border if it passed. Two years later, Allied-Signal has the largest number of petitions at the Department of Labor from employees displaced by NAFTA. ■

That Sinking Feeling

The cover for the April *American Spectator* carries a tag line for a story on "Ron Brown's Escape". Inside the issue, which hit newsstands just days before the commerce secretary's ill-fated Balkans journey, is a report on the special prosecutor's investigation of Brown. The headline: "Why Ron Brown Won't Go Down". ■

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Guru, (continued from p. 1)

blended suffer from headaches and roughly 50 percent have breathing problems.

Piasecki's other corporate models are equally suspect. Warner-Lambert has immense liabilities under the Superfund program and pleaded guilty last November to withholding information from the Food and Drug Administration about problems with some of the pharmaceuticals it manufactures. Union Carbide currently faces 5,000 lawsuits, mostly for its role in the manufacture of silicone breast implants and for its repeated abuse of environmental laws, including regular violations of the Toxic Substances Control Act. AT&T's offenses largely lie outside of the environmental realm, but its social conscience is seen in its firing of 40,000 workers last January.

In addition to ARCO, Piasecki has also quietly received money from the Nuclear Energy Institute. He consults for The Advancement of Sound Science Coalition, a corporate front group set up by APCO Associates, the beltway consulting shop whose "grassroots" fakery we recently exposed in these pages.

The stated aim of the Sound Science gang is to combat "the consequences of inappropriate science through focusing attention on current examples of unsound government research". This translates as opposition to any safety or health regulations that might hurt corporate profits. One recent Coalition news release charged that US agriculture is being undermined by "exaggerated public fears over pesticides".

Another of Piasecki's money-making schemes is his quarterly publication, *Corporate Environmental Strategy*. The magazine has a "corporate affiliate program" – among the participants are AT&T, Anheuser-Busch, Merck and a number of public relations firms – which offers exciting rewards to companies that donate between $2,500 and $10,000. In a letter to potential contributors, Piasecki says that for $3,500 and up companies can "place an article in *CES*" that will discuss "[corporate] research which you would like publicized".

Indeed, corporations supporting Piasecki win favor in the pages of *Corporate Environmental Strategy*. One recent issue contained stories on Anheuser-Busch's plans to achieve "environmental excellence" and on the "strategic promise" offered by AT&T's global regionalization strategy. ■

Pe-e-ew

In the past we've discussed how the Pew Charitable Trusts have bought up mainstream environmental groups. We've recently learned of a few other Pew dispensations.

- $675,000 to the rabid Hudson Institute, now home to Elliott Abrams. The bulk of the moolah was to be used for the purpose – bizarre, given the source of the money – of "build[ing] indigenous policy formulation capability in the Balkan states".
- $300,000 to the Heritage Foundation, joining such illustrious contributors as the Olin Foundation, Archer-Daniels-Midland, Exxon and Texaco. The grant was to be used to "promote more free and open trade among the US, Chile, Argentina and Venezuela".
- $400,000 to the Manhattan Institute to press for privatizations in Eastern Europe.
- $350,000 to Georgetown's Center for Strategic and International Studies, a notorious seedbed of imperial villainy.

These grants fit smoothly with the philanthropic tradition of Pew, the opening of new markets for capitalism and spreading of Christian dogma. Pew was one of the more devoted funders of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, which encouraged indigenous peoples to relinquish claims to their religion and lands. In the early 1960s, Pew was the primary funder of the John Birch Society, World Anti-Communism Crusade and Billy Graham's evangelical caravan. ■

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